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Watergate: How the Cold War Came Home

by Andrew St. George

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THE COLD WAR COMES HOME

The Watergate affair as a necessary consequence of a triumphant technocracy

THE TROUBLE WITH WATERGATE—as with every major modern metamorphosis—is that the bias runs, in Susan Sontag's phrase, against interpretation. The politicians know it; they have shied away from Watergate like brewery horses from a boiler explosion. The press has done better, but, collectively, not all that much better. With a few stubborn exceptions (most notably, the *Washington Post*), the media wasted months echoing the defensive Watergate remark attributed to President Nixon, "Give me proof." As for the politicians, they continued to cling to it for more than a year.

Watergate, said Robert S. Strauss, the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, "is not anything any Democrat could take pleasure in." The Democratic National Committee had filed a civil claim against the Republicans soon after the burglary of its Watergate office suite was discovered in 1972; apart from the stipulated damages (\$6.4 million), the lawsuit with its sworn pretrial hearings proved to be a gusher of background information; Chairman Strauss said he had tried to have the litigation dropped. Why on earth? "You are not blaming the Republicans?" asked an incredulous reporter. Strauss was visibly irritated, "Not all Democrats have white hats," he said, "and not all Republicans have black hats."

The commercial gaiety that sprang up about Watergate never caught on. It stayed near the surface, mechanical and mirthless; despite all the boozy laughter in the nightclubs, all the beepy Waterbug toys, all the expensively tailored, sirloin-faced, prime-time biggies working to dispel the growing unease with quips, the Watergate gag machine sparked no real fun. When spontaneous merriment finally does flood the theater of the absurd, it comes as the most unpredictable turn in the scenario: on the second day of John Mitchell's testimony before the Ervin Committee in July, the *Dick Cavett Show* was given over to a panel discussion of a legal issue, the new Supreme Court ruling on pornography, the talk all in earnest, the panelists all serious men and women, but when one of them remarked, matter-of-factly, on his way to some larger conclusion, that, of course, "you had to have a basic sense of confidence in our

constitutional system of justice," the studio audience unexpectedly began to chuckle—a snicker here, a ha-ha there—and suddenly the crowded auditorium was swept by a gale of ironic laughter, while the panelists sat, for once, stone-faced, disconnected, and plainly scared.

For a true sense of the absurd, one had to turn, paradoxically, to the conservatives—yes, to the most traditionalist and *bien-pensant* of politicians, aging national figures or younger upward-mobiles, but all of them lifelong Establishmentarians; it was from these powerhouses of positive thinking—Barry Goldwater, Lowell Weicker—that one suddenly heard the most agonized, the most truly wounded cries of outrage about the affair.

Something shadowy and ominous looms just out of range behind these troubled men, something alien and threatening. *Post equitem sedet atra cura*: black dread sits behind the horseman. What dark specter is driving these men of ours, contorting them into strange attitudes? What has turned the liberals, these men of ideas and articulation, into frightened wafflers and dodgers? What is forcing the conservatives—men of *stoica*, of cold-eyed realism, of what Senator Weicker used to call "hard-nosed politics"—



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toward such self-destructive fits of depression, toward pathological rage?

What is clouding the vision of our sharpest public minds? Mary McCarthy, pulling the plug on a lifetime bath of muriatic acidulousness, tells us that Watergate is a good thing, a national self-cleansing ritual, a historic rite of atonement for our Asian depredations, when, at least obstetrically, she should surely spot the mess for what it is—the poisonous afterbirth of Vietnam, not any sort of renaissance. David Halberstam says it's "the legacy of the cold war," when Watergate is plainly just the opposite—an end to external conflict, the inward-turning of the nation's aggressions, the unmistakable first step toward genuine convergence with our erstwhile totalitarian opponents.

THE GOVERNMENT, AS WE ALL KNOW, has long owned and operated a worldwide espionage and counterespionage apparatus. This vast intelligence establishment has suffered from a single genetic defect: the very law which gave it birth—the National Security Act of 1947—limited it largely to foreign operations. Late in 1970 the Administration took the techniques and equipment and some of the trained personnel in its foreign intelligence machinery and brought them home and turned them against its domestic parliamentary opposition.

To people concerned with preserving constitutional government in this country—in fact, to most people who think about government at all—this may sound like a startling development in itself, but it was far from unexpected among students of the American intelligence establishment. At the time of the first Watergate indictments last year, there appeared, coinci-

dentally, a remarkable book entitled *The CIA: The Myth and the Madness*, by Patrick J. McGarvey, a longtime CIA aide. "United States Intelligence," he concluded, "is now turning inward on the citizens of this country. . . . The next logical step would be for an administration to do exactly what its people suspect it of doing—start mounting intelligence operations against citizen groups and assemblies."

Such seismic change in a generation has caught the nation unawares, because the new technicist bureaucracies like the CIA have developed in unfamiliar, mysterious ways, often expanding and multiplying when we thought them to be in decline and disrepute. The aftermath of the Cuban invasion in April 1961 affords a necessary insight into this otherwise mysterious proliferation. Without an understanding of what happened within the CIA as a result of the Bay of Pigs—what actually happened as opposed to what most people thought had happened—Watergate cannot be described as anything other than an enigma.

I must have spent, all in all, a couple of years covering various phases of the Cuban invasion—the secret incubation, the training camps, the shocking climax, the bitter quarreling among exile groups, the raids against "Communist Cuba." I wrote more than one story about these events, and the stories ran in the largest magazines, in many millions of copies, syndicated in a dozen languages, and yet, looking back on it, I can see that although I tried to tell the truth, most of my conclusions were proven untrue in the long run. When I wrote about the Bay of Pigs, I always discussed it as a fiasco, a botch, a disaster of some sort. Most other reporters did the same; Theodore Draper had set out the concept for us—"a perfect failure"—and we stuck



to it. Had someone asked me during the early Sixties to explain, in twenty words or fewer, why I called the Bay of Pigs a failure, I would have said something like this: It was a military formula applied to an essentially political problem. It was an *inevitable* failure.

Truth through technocracy

BUT WHAT EVIDENCE DID WE HAVE, really, to say that the Cuban invasion was a failure? The discredited approach of applying military solutions to political problems, this failed formula we expected President Kennedy to junk with contempt, was instead polished up and adopted as the favorite method, in fact the essential strategy of the Kennedy Administration. The CIA, which we expected to suffer and starve for selling this "failed formula" to the President, turned out to be a big beneficiary of the wretched Cuban adventure. It grew in status and influence, not just in Latin America—where it was known in the trade as *La Compañía* or, sometimes, the Company—but all over the map: the Company acquired a private army in Laos, an air fleet in Thailand, a jumbo pacification program all its own in Vietnam, a combination of all three—i.e., a ground force and an air force and the go-code to pacify the stuffing out of any unfriendly native—in the hopelessly beset Congo.

Back on the New Frontier, Bobby Kennedy hardened into—in Joseph Kraft's one felicitous phrase—a "piano-wire" hawk. Piano wire is, of course, what guerrillas use to "silent-kill" enemy sentries. The White House advisers and policy planners whom Bobby Kennedy piano-wired after the Bay of Pigs were the liberals and soft-liners who had offered early prescient warnings *against* the ill-fated venture, men like Chester Bowles, who was derided as a "gutless wonder" for his opposition to the CIA's strong-arm tactics. But the hard-liners, the guerrilla thinkers, the special-warfare scholars had—with one or two token exceptions, men like Allen Dulles and Richard Bissell who were dismissed by way of window dressing—no reason to think the Bay of Pigs formula had failed. In a year, they were busily transplanting the same strategy to Southeast Asia.

How did this *happen*? I felt I could never write truthfully about Cuba again until I worked out some sort of answer, at least for myself. The trouble was, there were too many damn unknowns to draw up any sort of equation. For instance, why had the CIA lost interest in the facts about Cuba just when the invasion was at hand?

The agency had been a tireless data digger and interviewer and fact collector about the smallest details of life in Cuba under Castro—

until the landing preparations began in earnest in early 1961. Then intelligence collection began to drop off: the "operators" took over. It seemed that when the operational side of the agency cut in, the intelligence side cut out. It was baffling: it shook every bit of logic left in my head. It was like a flight leader tearing up his target maps just when his bomber wing gets attack orders. But I had had too many old, reliable friends among the invasion leaders, too many troubling talks in the back corners of Miami restaurants to ignore what was going on. The real question was: why?

Today, of course, we see the answer more clearly. The syndrome repeated itself, for one thing, in Vietnam, and this time outside observers were able to study it more carefully. Hannah Arendt eventually explained it with her magisterial theory of "defactualization"—the concept that public-relations techniques and other computer-age developments were turning Washington away from reality, from empirical data, provable facts, rational truth, toward image-making and self-deception.

WITHIN A YEAR OF THE BAY OF PIGS, the CIA curiously and inexplicably began to grow, to branch out, to gather more and more responsibility for the "Cuban problem." The Company was given authority to help monitor Cuba's wireless traffic: to observe its weather; to publish some of its best short stories (by Cuban authors in exile) through its wholly owned CIA printing company; to follow the Castro government's purchases abroad and its currency transactions (a separate economic research branch was set up in South Miami for the purpose); to move extraordinary numbers of clandestine field operatives in and out of Cuba; to acquire a support fleet of ships and aircraft in order to facilitate these secret agent movements; to advise, train, and help reorganize the police and security establishments of Latin countries which felt threatened by Castro's guerrilla politics; to take a hand in U-2 overflights and in sea-air ELINT (Electronic Intelligence) operations aimed at tracing Cuban coastal-defense communications on special devices; to pump such vast sums into political operations thought to be helpful in containing Castro that by the time of the 1965 U.S. military intervention in the Dominican Republic both the bad guys and the good guys—i.e., the "radical" civilian politicians and the "conservative" generals—turned out to have been financed by *La Compañía*. Owing largely to the Bay of Pigs, the CIA ceased being an invisible government: it became an empire.

This sort of phenomenal growth cannot be explained in conventional terms. It is true technological change. It occurs, as Lewis Mumford

demonstrated in a crucial insight, "above any consideration of its own success." Technetronic bureaucracies expand, not for the sake of mere production, or efficiency, or success, but—as Mumford concluded—"to institute a system of total controls."

Take, for example, the phenomenon of the bogus success. By the early Sixties, watchful observers could begin to trace a disturbing development within the CIA; illegal entry, known as a "bag job," became one of the intelligence megamachine's accepted data acquisition methods, and what eventually came to count was not the data but the *method*. Rigidly, compulsively, the technological apparatus repeated the same movements: when a bag job did not yield worthwhile information, the apparatus itself cooked up the information so that the break-in would conform to the encoded patterns of a "successful" operation.

When Don Vitalio de la Torre, the Cuban consul general in Buenos Aires, defected to the "free world" in 1961, he was instructed by his CIA counterpart—by 1961 the intelligence establishment maintained its own foreign service to parallel the Castro government's diplomatic representations, a Cuban exile *delegado* stationed in every Latin capital—to burglarize the embassy safe and bring along its contents. Don Vitalio's dowry proved disappointing—routine diplomatic service messages—but promptly enough a stack of forged documents appeared from a CIA trick shop, suggesting extensive Communist subversion in Argentina. These counterfeits were handed to the Cuban consul with orders that he display them as genuine—in fact, as the contents of the safe that he had burglarized himself—when he announced his defection at a Buenos Aires news conference organized by La Compañía.

As it happened, this staged exercise was a failure. Argentinian naval intelligence proved inquisitive and as resentful about such *gringo* manipulateness as it was of Communist subversion; the scenario proved a turkey. There was a scandal, which in retrospect looks like an early rehearsal for the Watergate imbroglio. Still, the basic methodology of the megamachine was too rigidly encoded among its information and memory circuits to be altered by such setbacks.

Several years later, summing up the lessons to be learned from the Pentagon Papers (lessons equally applicable to the Bay of Pigs or Watergate), Hannah Arendt wrote: "The divergence between facts established by the intelligence services... and the premises, theories and hypotheses according to which decisions were finally made is total. And the extent of our failures and disasters throughout these years can be grasped only if one has the totality of this divergence firmly in mind."

The success of the Bay of Pigs

ALL OF THIS WAS TRUE, of course, it was felicitous and insightful, but one night I was running Dr. Arendt's defactualization detector through some test samples, through David Halberstam's report about Vietnam, *The Best and the Brightest*, through Col. L. Fletcher Prouty's important new book, *The Secret Team*—her calibrations proved right every time—when the idea struck me: *what if they were not failures?*

The Bay of Pigs. The Dominican invasion. Vietnam. Those bankrupt game plans in Egypt, in Chile. Suppose none of them was, in the larger historic view, a failure at all?

There was no success, of course, in what these ventures set out to accomplish abroad. But perhaps we should focus on what we have accomplished, as a state and a society, at home. Even a cursory glance will show that's where the real action was.

At home, we have metamorphosed, in a short quarter-century, from a pluralistic, open-market society into one of the world's most tightly controlled, most relentlessly manipulated technological nations. The centralized, bureaucratic-technicist manipulation of energy resources, foreign affairs, communications, Presidential elections means that we are creating a post-industrial societal model of what has been identified as a technetronic command society.

Perhaps that was what we had in mind all along. If psychiatry is right in assuming that, for all our self-deluding talk, we go along structuring the sort of situation we really want, then we must assume that maybe we never meant to "democratize" Greece or Santo Domingo; we just meant to de-democratize ourselves.

Throughout the Fifties and Sixties our interventionist activities abroad and our slogans at home perpetuated and reinforced one another—remember "brinkmanship," "containment," "nation-building," "the domino theory," all the golden oldies from the epoch of special-warfare diplomacy—simply because this was the most direct and dependable, time-tested way for providing the necessary precipitation of unfacts and propaganda, the necessary climate of image-making and pliceness America needed to assure the growth of its technology, its bureaucracy, its centralized management structures. Richard Nixon and John Mitchell may have been instinctively, if not consciously, motivated toward Watergate by an intuitive sense that the era of foreign intervention was drawing to a close. From now on America would have to generate the climate of defactualization and pliceness right at home if it wanted continued progress toward fully achieved, seamlessly engineered, cybernetically controlled techno-totalitarianism.

"Hoover realized that inevitably, disastrously, the CIA's tainted ways were seeping back home to America; there is a vengeful law of historic osmosis about these things."

IF THESE WATERGATE NOTES have an underlying theory at all, this is it. For the moment, let's consider only how many unsolved mysteries it helps to clear up. Our theory would explain why the Kennedys instinctively detested Chester Bowles and Adlai Stevenson and instinctively loved Maxwell Taylor and Gen. Victor "Brute" Krulak. It would explain those spontaneously fraudulent statistics with which President Johnson drove the press into paroxysms during the Dominican intervention: bum statistics are simply part of the generally required atmosphere of defactualization, and a President must make his contribution like any citizen.

It would explain much of the Kennedy special-warfare doctrine and almost all of Robert McNamara. It would explain the money we spent clobbering Indochina. It would explain, perhaps in its grisly entirety, the demented federal drug-control program. It would explain how G. Gordon Liddy got into that drug program and why he was promoted out of it into the most sensitive executive position on the staff of the Committee to Re-elect the President—promoted by men like John Mitchell and Jeb Stuart Magruder, who, afterward, in the air-conditioned rationalism of the Senate Caucus Room, described Liddy as a "nut."

Will our theory do all this? Most probably, if we do not lose sight of our assumptions and criteria, our special algorithms, so to speak, and if we keep in mind that these introductory calculations represent an attempt to define the unknowns rather than solve them—an algebra of propositions. We must bear in mind that the principal object of the men implicated in Watergate was one of transformation, of translation of the Presidential power to "persuade" into a power to "command," of investing the nation's chief executive with the executive authority demanded by the age of technetronics—this was the underlying motivation, the essential compulsion, the true glandular thrust of the Nixon team's approach to Watergate.

Not to protect the President from his enemies? No. We know now that behind the scenes they labored to *increase* the number of White House enemies, not to diminish it. They created new enemies by drawing up long lists with absurdly assembled names—Carol Channing? Joseph Kraft? Tony Randall? *Joe Namath*?—they stockpiled enemies and went shopping for more.

The enemy within

WHAT IS HISTORY TRYING to tell us? Technological society is a matter of *internal* controls. The very concept of national security has changed; its focus is no longer on spies and seditionists, but on the bureaucracy's internal

power arrangements and hierarchical structures. This semantic mutation—a truly significant and revolutionary switch, by the way—was vividly illustrated during the Senate Select Committee hearings on Watergate. Senator Sam Ervin still thought of "national security" as some sort of defensive or protective arrangement against infiltrators or subversives, against an *external* threat; this brought him into constant conflict with the witnesses, most of them Presidential bureaucrats a full generation younger than Senator Ervin, who talked of "national security" and meant, of course, the way power was divided and structured and manipulated *within* the White House.

Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than the continuing struggle for power between the FBI and the CIA. In the early Sixties, J. Edgar Hoover began to sense, vaguely but unmistakably, that he was in serious trouble. The Old Man was nearing seventy; he was stiff, cranky, remote, and no longer nimble when it came to image-polishing. For four decades he had maintained his preeminence as the nation's first peace officer by keeping a tight grip on all domestic national police operations. But now he became aware that, step by step, the Central Intelligence Agency was moving in on him.

The Director had done well on the bureaucratic battlefields; in 1969 his bureau was as large as the State Department. The FBI's budget was never questioned and its *numen*, its aura of rectitude and efficiency, was maintained with as much near-religious reverence as the politicians of a secular republic ever muster. But the Bureau's hegemony over domestic intelligence activities was waning; the bold Easterners and mean-knuckled Midwesterners who ran the Agency were gaining on old Badge Number One.

Hoover detested them. He loathed atheistic Reds, long-haired yuppies, Black Panthers, fuzzy-minded do-gooders, and Dr. Martin Luther King—alone with an intimate it would be "Mister Martin Lucifer Coon" and then that harsh snort of a chuckle—but what he really hated was the CIA. He thought of it as a viperine lair of liars and high-domed intellectuals, of insolent Yalies who sneered at Fordham's finest, of rich young ne'er-do-wells who dabbled in spy work because they could not be trusted to run the family business, of wily "Princeton Ought-Ought" himself, "Dickie" Helms, who spun his tweedy web from an ultramodern, electronically secured enclave up the river in Virginia.

Hoover kept total control of the Bureau, but as a flag-rank American civil servant, a senior managing director of his own people's polity, so to speak, he was not a totalitarian. He believed in setting certain limits, certain standards—if there are no standards, what is national security meant to secure? He was old-

fashioned in this: "No murders, no physical torture, no 'administrative detentions' in the Bureau while this Director is Director," and there were none.

For forty years, no special agent fired a loaded gun into the temple of a suspect "double agent"; Hoover felt that an image of federal officers as torturers or assassins would ruin everything, would cost the bureau all the popular support it had. Then the Ivy Leaguers of the Company came along and pulled the trigger as lightly and insouciantly as a Choate boy would throw a stink bomb on Class Day.

Assassination—"dismissal under extreme prejudice" accompanied by a wink and a forefinger imitating slit-throat or bullet-in-the-brain—and all the other bestial calamities awaiting those who got in the way of the Company in Guatemala, Brazzaville, Saigon, or Rio de Janeiro became common Washington bar talk. Hoover realized that inevitably, disastrously, the CIA's tainted ways were seeping back home to America; there is a vengeful law of historic osmosis about these things.

HOOVER WAS PROVEN FATALLY RIGHT. The CIA began by handing out bribes to tropical politicians and banana generals in the Fifties; in the Sixties it was passing under-the-table money to the National Student Association, to the American Newspaper Guild (more than a million dollars for the boys of the press, the Company didn't skimp there), to the National Council of Churches. There were incidents of violence and murder among the CIA operatives encamped by the hundreds in Miami and, in lesser numbers, in New York and Washington, Baltimore, and Atlanta. There was trouble about counterfeit money, about black-marketeering with plastic explosives issued by the agency, about other things that local cops resented. Hoover, tight-lipped with fury, frequently found himself ordered to provide "cover" for CIA men in capital trouble with the "conventional" authorities.

Hoover was an empire-builder, a master bureaucrat, a propagandist, and an intriguer when the interests of the bureau suggested it, but these interests did not suggest getting into bed with "CIA-oriented paramilitary specialists" itching to pacify the American countryside with nation-building programs. Oddly enough, what tore the Old Man's fraying self-restraint were growing reports of promiscuous wiretapping and bugging sorties undertaken by operatives from other agencies—perhaps CIA agents, perhaps men working for the vast Defense Intelligence Agency—in Washington, New York, Los Angeles, and Miami.

The FBI was no stranger to tapping the telephone conversations of a "subject" or smug-

gling a bug into his private office if circumstances required, but under the Old Man microphone surveillance was also practiced in ways that kept the whole enterprise within the bounds of sanity. An FBI inspector, himself past sixty, who knew Hoover during these declining years, said that "it was true the Director had gotten old and a bit eccentric, and his vanity hurt him. But I think it was also true he knew in his heart that a period of time was coming to an end, a time that had some moderation and give-and-take and a grain of common sense in everything. His time. He said once, 'The next thing they'll have will be a CIA President,' and of course he was bitter, but what he meant was that he wanted no part of what was coming, and I can't say I blame him."

A nation under surveillance

BUT EVEN HOOVER HAD TO FACE REALITY in the end. The times were wicked. The media turned fickle. He was old. And the White House had become too deeply entwined with the CIA—Desmond Fitzgerald briefing Robert McNamara, Bill Bundy briefing Bill Moyers, Bill Colby briefing Walt Rostow, Bill Rosson briefing Gen. Earle Wheeler, and then of course McNamara, Moyers, Rostow, and Wheeler briefing the President. It wasn't the information—most of the intelligence that flowed uphill toward the Oval Office in these briefings was doctored and "defactualized" pap—it was the clout: the pecking order changeth. Hoover was out and the Agency was in, and that was all there was to it.

Like most other people in the government (not to speak of the Congress or the press or the electorate), Hoover had never clearly perceived that during the late 1960s secret intelligence had become America's fastest-growing service industry. It is not easy to trace the precise outlines, the exploding budgets and multiplying assets of our national megamachine for espionage and counterespionage, for, as in every wildly successful enterprise, accounting seldom kept pace with runaway expansion.

In July 1973, Sen. William Proxmire suggested—tentatively, for the Senator could not get all the necessary data, not by a long shot—that the U.S. intelligence establishment "employs about 148,000 persons and spends approximately \$6.2 billion a year."

Aerial intelligence proved costliest; the Air Force budget totals included some of the vast sums needed to launch and maintain high-altitude spy satellites. But, on the whole, Senator Proxmire's figures were said to be low. Former intelligence people estimate that the total money spent on intelligence each year comes nearer to \$10 billion. And as in every growth industry, what counts is not the cash flow: it's the action.

The action was extraordinary, dynamic, expansive throughout the late Sixties: it was bullish and "creative" in the sense that stock-market promoters talk of "creative accounting." "National security" was converted into an imaginative, fast-growing enterprise, always on the move for new worlds to conquer. "When I was in the Senate, speaking out against Administration policies," former Republican Sen. Charles Goodell revealed not long ago in a matter-of-fact manner, "I learned that my official telephone was tapped, and that Military Intelligence agents were following me around the country, building a dossier."

One should pause to absorb this in its full innovative enormity—a United States Senator tapped and trailed on his legislative rounds by *American Army* agents?—but there are facts and figures to back up the claim: Sen. Sam Ervin's other investigating committee, the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights, revealed last year, in a report that went largely unnoticed, that by 1969 the Army—not the Defense Department, just the Army—had built up a "massive system" for keeping watch on U.S. politics.

THE ARMY, TO BE SURE, should not be made the goat of this story. It was caught in an overall uptrend, a nationwide, expansionary spiral of spying, and it was compelled to keep up with its competitors. The simple fact is that as the Sixties turned into the Seventies, America became a nation under surveillance. The trouble was that in their desperate push for a share of this vast new technological service market, the intelligence agencies overcommitted themselves and—having no stocks or bonds to sell—they sold their souls.

They did it, not in any abstract or remotely metaphysical way, but as vividly and dramatically as Faust: to make it big in the new world where they found themselves, the world of computers, conglomerates, and technetronic controls, the intelligence establishment traded in both its ethos and *telos*. For a leading role in the new scenarios of power, it gave up the essence of its being; intelligence became internalized, technified, and bureaucratized.

Internalization meant great change. Intelligence had been curious about the world; now it just wanted to know what was happening in Washington. The traditional drive to discover what other nations, other governments were doing gave way to an overriding concern with the situation back in the domestic halls of power, in the conference suites and map rooms and executive offices where the internal decisions emerged.

Foreign intelligence data could be adjusted, revised—in a word, doctored—to fit the re-

quirements of the moment: but what *were* the requirements? They were spun and shaped by a hundred shifting breezes, by the mood of the White House, the preoccupations of the Joint Chiefs, the place in the pecking order of various departmental projects, the latest shifts in aides and advisers, the undercurrents and intrigues and floating alliances between ambitious bureaucrats.

Thus the generals and station chiefs and agency heads reversed the thrust of their intelligence effort; their information priorities and collection targets now ran homeward and upward, toward the top echelons of the national-security bureaucracy. Internationalization was *revolutionary* change.

Supplanting the CIA

IN 1968, NIXON AND HIS MEN SAW—their vision was cold, mechanical, they were themselves technicians—that the intelligence establishment had technified and institutionalized itself to no one's benefit but its own. The essence of true technicism is control; in the new executive team's view, the national-security bureaucracy was unbound, almost anarchical. The espionage megamachine would have to be rewired, firmly connected to the right power sockets, to the only control console the new Administration meant to operate in Washington: the White House.

This was, of course, more easily decided than done; but the intelligence bureaucracy was vulnerable, and Nixon's men knew it. In the rush toward expansion and technification, the historic ethos of intelligence (to produce true information) and its practical purpose (to produce relevant information) were both lost. Even fogged by the hubris of their rapid rise to power—or perhaps quickened by its subliminal tremors, for by the late Sixties Washington was full of senior officials chilly with self-doubt under their greatcoats of authority—the hierarchs of national security knew that, as relentlessly as in classical tragedy, nemesis dogged their heels. It overtook them perversely, their new prince's displeasure borne by a seneschal with bifocals and a weight problem, *Command Decision* reshot by Fritz Lang with S. Z. Sakall in the fateful lead.

Henry Kissinger led the White House raid. If the CIA had been allowed to triumph over Hoover and the FBI, then the question was how would the White House supplant the CIA. Professor Kissinger, the President's new assistant for national security and *Gleichschaltung*, promptly began to do all the virile and tumescent things with which he had already reduced the State Department to a pale meretrix.

In the early fall of 1969, CIA memoranda of the most elaborate and ambitious sort began to

return from the White House with evaluative comments like "Crap!" and "Utter garbage" scribbled across their faces in Dr. Kissinger's own hand. In late 1969 he began rejecting the CIA National Intelligence Estimates; he ordered, instead, that the Agency submit the unfinished data, the field materials for its estimates. Dr. Kissinger, it seemed, had decided to put the White House into the production of in-house intelligence estimates.

If the President's memoranda were the CIA's most important product, the National Intelligence Estimates were its cherished *chef d'oeuvre*. A separate bureaucracy of estimators and analyzers had grown up within the Agency, an elite subculture of scholars and statisticians and cultivated *feuilletonistes* who produced these voluminous, detailed studies for the National Security Council. To tell the Agency that the White House no longer wanted a finished NIE on some essential area of conflict (Vietnam or Biafra), just the field data—it was like telling James Reston not to bother with the typewriter: just phone in your notes; someone else will write the column.

Even before 1969 drew to a close, the thunderstruck intelligence bureaucracy heard something else, something that sounded like the crack of doom: the White House had begun hiring intelligence agents of its own. Presidential Counsel John Ehrlichman was reported to be recruiting operatives for "secret work" among retired New York City special-services plainclothesmen, and another White House lawyer—one of the new fixers who arrived with Nixon's entourage, Charles W. Colson, already on the "redline" list of both the FBI and the CIA for his brazen come-ons to labor leaders with criminal records—was said to have put a former FBI agent on his office payroll.

IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN the statutory cornerstone and the hard-rock fundament of the national-security bureaucracy's power that it was the President's only source of intelligence information. Other government departments could put in their occasional *trouvailles*, but they could do so only through the channels of the "intelligence community" presided over by the CIA. Now this vital monopoly, this *lifeline* was being shredded. It isn't easy to render a condign description, a graphic reprise of the surprise, anger, and panic that convulsed the espionage establishment when it discovered that the White House was *putting operatives in the field*.

It was the beginning. Three years were to pass before the first burglary arrests at Watergate, then sixteen months of headlines and hearings, a great many mean things made public, and yet this opening chord, this first electric alarm of the great crisis somehow remained

muffled, insulated, giving those who knew about it the odd sensation that when Watergate finally did begin to emerge into public view, it did so backward.

And yet, the espionage establishment need not have despaired. *Post equitem sedet atra cura*. Watergate was etched subliminally beneath the very first instructions Ehrlichman and Colson issued to their agents. The fated curse of technicist bureaucratism overtook the new White House spymasters with the endemic rapidity of tropical spirochetes engulfing a Norwegian ship's crew.

Their intelligence operations quickly became intragovernmental, that is, mutually competitive. By the end of 1970, every first-rank Nixon aide had to have his own spy shop, or at least be a partner in one. They internalized their intelligence activities with headlong speed. They technified senselessly—charts, graphs, bugs, concealed cameras, dart guns, phone taps, the most expensive monitoring equipment ever to appear on any agent's expense voucher, where a single inside source and a few intelligent questions would have been enough. They began to bureaucratize even while they were a handful, by constructing their own model of reality and falling under its artificial, self-generated norms. Their failure to perceive other models of reality led them into the usual errors. Certainly they underestimated both the bitterness and the subtlety of the CIA hierarchs, and it is conceivable that the CIA arranged for a trap at the Watergate.

On the morning of June 17, 1972, the watch officer at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, woke director Richard Helms a little after seven to tell him about the arrest of "the White House crew," for that was how the intelligence professionals had come to think of the agents hired by John Mitchell and John Ehrlichman and the other Nixon aides. Both the CIA and the FBI had long known, of course, about the existence of the Hunt-Liddy team. The CIA had infiltrated it with a confidential informant, just as if Hunt and Liddy had been foreign diplomats, and the informant, an old Company operative named Eugenio Martinez, code-named "Rolando," who had reported in advance on the Watergate project, was in fact at that moment himself under arrest for his part in the break-in.

"Ah, well," Helms said, "They finally did it." He chatted for a few moments with the young watch officer, who said it was "a pity about McCord and some of those guys." "Well, yes," Helms said. "A pity about the President, too, you know. They really blew it. The sad thing is, we all think 'That's the end of it,' and it may be just the beginning of something worse. If the White House tries to ring me through central, don't switch it out here, just tell them you reported McCord's arrest already, and I was very surprised." □

about the St. George piece. Superficially it has a few good thoughts. Actually, it represents absolutely no "investigative journalism" at all. I can often spot that upon which he has improvised and conjectured, presenting his notions as established fact. The fact is that some is incredibly wrong and some just not credible. Intelligence agencies, in practice, are over the barrel. They can't really deny, so an awful lot of garbage is accepted as manna. I've made a few marks if you want to discuss this. They should remind me. Impossible for Martinez to have been on assignment for the CIA at the break-in. CIA was not out of favor 1969. Helms given wider authority long after that. There are and have to be other significant "national security" inputs to the White House. Most obvious, State Dept. He really doesn't know the intelligence community well, not even from extensive reading. What interests me most of all is the possibility he is used by the revanchists of the right within CIA, of whom Hunt was one. And even on quotes, I doubt authenticity. Look at the end, Helms being told the White House gang was arrested. None of them except McCord, who was never on the WH payroll. The others were Cubans only. Liddy Hunt and those of the past and those of whom we do not know, not one. People are inclined to trust the printed word, especially if there is an initial appeal to prejudices. Far from terror, the CIA was quite cooperative with the White House spokes, remarkably, I'd say, considering everything, more than has appeared in print. ...I started back and am glad to get it. Too much to do for much reading, only in-between minutes. HW 10/29/73